

## THOSE DISTANT 28

"Due to reasons of an almost necessary continuity, the issue now on the reader's hands should be an updating exercise of that alledged *School of Madrid...*".

So did Rafael Moneo begin his article called "28 non-tenured architects" published in *Arquitectura* his seventeen years ago.

This quoted *School of Madrid* so repeatedly attempted to define is now finally considered as an impossible: members so unorthodox, miscellaneous, diverse, so defiance as they were, they are, and they will be, fortunately enrich the academic non-classifiable legacy. For freedom is the essential source for any creative work that seems worthwhile.

What appeared to be in the following pages of that article a confrontation between Madrid and Barcelona, was to me always unexistent in the realm of Architecture. This argument was later used as a highly efficient device to promote that original group of architects that started the battle of the neverending conflict between artists and society. The architect trying to build up the best possible pieces for the public; society, on the other hand, so often determined to oppose.

I present this statement framed in these conditions of encouragement and promotion of the youngest architects of Madrid.

What happened to those 28 architects linked together under the common circumstance of age, dedication to teaching and a strong critical judgement?

Although they were very young then, time has equally passed over all of them, despite the fact that the trace left is different in each case. In their works, as in their general understanding of life, time has been a stern judge. It has also been quite different for them in their teaching careers. Some of them became Professors at the School of Architecture of Madrid: Juan Navarro Baldeweg, 1984; Alberto Campo Baeza, 1986; Manuel de las Casas, 1987; Antón Capitel, 1992; Gabriel Ruiz Cabrero, 1995 y Javier Frechilla, 1998. Victor López Coteló in Munich, 1995. And Juan Antonio Cortés, of Composition in Valladolid, 1989. And another nine are still lecturers on Projects at the School in Madrid. Some as senoir lecturers: María Teresa Muñoz, who was Director of the Project Department from 1988 to 1991, Javier Bellosillo y José Manuel López Peláez; and others as assistant lecturers: Ignacio de las Casas, Francisco Rodríguez de Parterroyo, Eduardo Sánchez, Daniel Zarza, Jerónimo Junquera y Estanislao Pérez Pita.

Their works, as framed within a critical judgement, has also suffered a logical transformation. The natural tendency to accommodate in a well defined body of thought has only been overcome by some of them, those who are still producing a rigorous architecture or contributing with more profound texts. Those outstanding figures and their works, on which time has proven beneficial, are the ones that persist in this incredible practice of *resistance* which is always architecture.

## A DETERMINED DETERMINATION

Convinced by the need of promoting this architectural resistance, all throughout this years I've been writing several articles about the young Spanish architecture.

Already in 1977 in my "7+7+7" published in *A+U* of Tokyo I did propose a list of several names (most of which will appear in Moneo's later article in *Arquitectura Bis*) with the same encouraging aim to promote the young architecture produced in Madrid.

Later in 1985 I published on *Process Architecture* of Tokyo "The Architecture of Madrid: an unresistable avalanche". Half of that issue was dedicated to the young architects of Madrid. It came to persist in the interest of the *Young Spanish Architecture* published earlier and that would become the reference (red) book of young Spanish architects as it depicted authors from all over Spain.

In 1992 I insisted on the matter in *Arquitectos* the widely spread magazine of the Spanish Architects Professional Board. I published the article "Architects for the next century" where following the footsteps of Italo Calvino and performing some kind of "dribbling" so that names would not show, I insisted on the same direction.

There have been other references in reviews, articles, and comments appeared in papers and magazines about certain architects such as the Annual Review on Arts of *El País*.

The aim has always been the same: defending and encouraging the youngest architects from Madrid, against the society which grows more ignorant and uncultivated by the day. The title of the article appeared in *El País* in 1985 was highly expressive on this matter: "Saturn will devour his sons no more".

Who are these architects that we refer to at the heading of this text, defined as outcast, and that I urge to "resist"? They are a group of architects from Madrid who are positioned in the same physical coordinates as those 28 architects. They form a young group, all of them with teaching interests and high ability for criticism that clearly shows in their works. Just as those 28 but with even harder enthusiasm.

## FAMILY TRAITS

Although these, clearly unorthodox group, does not feel linked to the reknown figures of previous generations, they perform before them with an incredible modesty, and it is common to hear them show their respect and admiration. We can somehow recognise in them the virtues and abilities of these familiar traits: the elegance of De la Sota and courage of Oiza; the spontaneity and sharpness of Carvajal; the wisdom of Fernández Alba and high cultural knowledge of Moneo; the defiance of Fisac and simplicity of Cabrero; the ability for construction of Corrales and (in most admired remembrance) wit of Molezún.

All these characteristic features reappear in many various ways in these new architectures. The highly impressive quality of the architecture of the group of Spanish masters, whose importance grows bigger with time, cannot be ignored by those that now have taken the baton as if in an obstacle race. And though these mentioned figures are generic we should point out some outstanding formal similarities. We could find De la Sota in many of Sancho and Madridejos work; Oiza always silently appearing in Aparicio's projects just as Cabrero and Cano Lasso subtly do so in Aranguren and Gallegos. Corrales and Molezún in Ábalos and Herreros. There is something of Carvajal in Matos and Martínez Castillo. And features of Moneo in Tuñón and Mansilla. We could also find the original character of Fisac in Cánovas, Amann and Maruri. And so we could keep on searching and finding logical common traits in this extensive family.

### KNOWING, KNOWING HOW TO TEACH, WANTING TO TEACH

All these architects have in common their interest in academic life. For this young group from Madrid, teaching in the School of Architecture is not something frivolous. Preparing lectures, designing study plans, and absolute dedication of the time to teaching, prove how essential the academic dimension is for the understanding of architecture. They fulfill that threefold condition that Julián Marías demanded to any lecturer: *knowing, knowing how to teach, wanting to teach*. They know, they keep on studying and thinking, they know how to teach, proving that it is possible to approach architecture from different points of view. They want to teach because they devote generous and enthusiastically their time to teaching.

The most solid group is precisely that formed by some of the youngest lecturers of the School: Ábalos-Herreros, Aranguren-Gallegos, Aparicio and Sancho-Madridejos. We could very possibly foresee a good harvest of bright doctorates among this group.

A good proof of the quality and intensity of their teaching is the overwhelming amount of students applying to be part of the units they run. I can assure that their critics and juries, far off from being the mere "I like it" or "I dislike it" are based upon deep theory. They all spread out a high ability for analysis that we can obviously find echoed in their built work. Their aim is to prevent students from approaching architecture from the mere formal position. They know, they know how to teach, they want to teach.

### EVEN MORE CULTIVATED

The generation of those 28 that lived through the events of May 1968 in Paris loaded their cultural saddlebags well after they had left university. The Architecture school of that time had definitely abandoned the severe classical discipline as a symbol of many other things, and had focused with not much analysis, on the formal aspect of Mies, Le Corbusier, or Aalto; not having a real deep understanding of them, at least in the key concepts, and accepting their teachers' interpretation.

Those architects from that generation considered more cultivated were simply better read showing off that little wisdom but disguised in the pedantic speech given by such a young age.

We can say that time needed for acknowledging a reasonable level of wisdom is fortunately much slower. It takes the necessary tempo of marinating the chicken with the wine that demands

slowness. The members of that generation, more intellectual were maturing and increasing their knowledge, rejoicing and lingering in it and resisting difficult times given those qualities described in Moneo's article.

For all of them writing their doctoral dissertation, usually of historical analysis, gave them the opportunity to tune up their instruments for critical judgement through which they comprehend the creative act of designing architecture. To all of them they proved useful in broadening and deepening the rigour of their teaching and their built work.

This process has been done more intensely and at an even higher cruising speed by this young generation of architects that we present today. It turns out to be coincidental that the topic of doctoral research and the teachings they offer in their lectures resemble the depth of their built work. Their cultural level has also been more solid since university years. That necessity lead them to be more rigorous and perform their ideas as "built" ideas.

Following the wide Spanish tradition they show certain heterodoxy regarding what is fashionable. They do not follow that pattern or won't admit to be classified as such. They are no "minimalists", no "deconstructivists", no "high-tech" gurus even though they would extract and feel contaminated, in a heterodoxical way by some of these tendencies.

Their culture and erudition led them to write down their beliefs. They write and by doing that they seem to gain distance from the old ones. They intend to explain the key ideas on what relies their architecture. They quite often publish their writings. Most of Spanish architectural magazines have included their articles and when they feel they need even more projection they create their own publishing ground. This comes to real terms in a prestigious "fanzine" called *Circo*, created by Rojo, Tuñón y Mansilla. Sancho y Madridejos published a witty article named "The paradox of void". They were replied in a fresh and spontaneous article "Conversation" by Ábalos and Herreros. All this debating authors belong to the heterogeneous group that performs the young and ravishingly interesting architecture of Madrid.

## OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Even though they do not reach the level of Gehry advertising chairs, or Bofill doing so with yogourth, these architects know that good cloth sells well without publicity. An architect trapped in his study can only become moth-eaten or insane or simply dead. It is not only something as natural as talking to others that justifies the creative process. It is simply that without a client there is no building. Without a building there is no architecture. What could be more ridiculous than bullfighting capework without a bull? Get rid of the bull and it is easy.

All these architects know this very well and they focus their efforts in broadcasting their work worldwide to communicate that architecture is still possible. If they have to walk off the beaten track they happily do so. Just like the great masters.

Le Corbusier showed great interest in getting pictures done of the Ville Savoie that should be loyal to its condition of Pandora's box. If he had to lay a hat and spectacles on the table to make it look in a certain way, he would. Palladio would do the effort of writing his four books in order to spread his beliefs. Utzon, again aided by photography, drew up with his hands in motion a well known image

that condenses his ideas for Sydney. In the same way this young architects know well that they cannot remain "in cloisters". And they have chosen to be off the beaten track.

## COMPETITION INTERRUPTUS

"I am somebody traumatised because of competitions. I am covered with scars, some of which are still open wounds. And I know that I am not the only one. I have seen many friends, collaborators and colleagues left in a dreadful state for months after. In the world of Architecture the day will come when we will kill each other. Everyone should know what it is to do this intense teamwork for weeks or even months. How much effort and passion put into it; the immense work that fades away in every review; the humiliation of a result that is never objective; a missed commission for a project that sinks you in a deep depression, that you try to forget by drinking just as if you had lost a dear relative. Some of these projects never leave you and they come back as a very precise obsession to let you know that after all they still exist." In such a ruthless way, Jean Nouvel explained himself in 1984, though at the time of this bitter testimony he was already starting the *Institute du Monde Arabe* in Paris that launched him into the public arena. He has not stopped building since.

Competitions, terrible when lost and joyful when won, are the first and most tangible resort for young generations. In the same way other senior professionals (though youthful in spirit) still keep submitting their proposals for competitions. On the other side of that coin we find that society devours those architects that are sceptical towards competitions but choose to sign off for degrading easy-money projects. This group of architects from the School of Madrid are not only persisting in submitting competitions, but winning them as well:

Aranguren-Gallegos (European, Bentaberria), Ábalos-Herreros (M-30 Madrid, RENFE Madrid, Palencia, Usera), Sancho-Madrdejos (Paris Opera House, San Sebastián de los Reyes, San Fernando de Henares), Aparicio (Congress of Madrid, Venice Biennale), Cánovas-Amann-Maruri (Zaragoza, Cadalso de los Vidrios), Tuñón-Mansilla (El Águila, León), y Matos-Martínez Castillo (Palladio) and many countless others.

It is also very important to point out that there is a sad truth hidden behind: over years of professional career one piles up a countless number of lost competitions where you have lavished an enormous amount of effort, time and money, and above all, enthusiasm and creativity.

I can still remember the clear argument that Clorindo Testa, the great argentinian architect, will use to sustain that idea. Talking to me about the competition that he had just lost, he mentioned how it could be possible to fill up one of Buenos Aires longer avenues, Calle Ribadavia, with the endless list of names that had entered that competition. He definately considered that as a pour out, a nonsense.

I suspect that the architects that I am refering to in this article have already thrown themselves in the ruthless vulcano of the recently announced competition for the extension of the Prado Museum in Madrid. But they are fire-resisting. (For that competition, resolved well after the completion of this article, most of these architects presented their proposals. Among the winners where Martínez-Matos). I should say that I find more worrying the fact that after going through the difficulties of winning a competition one still has to fight the uncertainty of whether it will be built. Long ago I wrote about this

particular matter in an article called "*Concursitos Interruptus*" (*Competition Interruptus*) complaining about the enormous amount of projects that go misscarried, with no real consequences, as society denies the building of that particular proposal. We could quite certainly, following Testa's image, fill up another very long street with the names of buildings awarded in competitions and never built.

## NAMES, NAMES

Who are this group of architects we are referring to? They compile an already well-known group of usual suspects, that enjoy the threefold virtuous condition of being still very young , devoting their time to teaching and performing their exceptional ability for criticism.

María José Aranguren and José González Gallegos, Iñaki Ábalos y Juan Herreros, Jesús Aparicio y Juan Carlos Sancho are now senior lecturers at the Architecture School of Madrid. Still in their early forties, they constitute the *pièce de resistance* of this group.

Aranguren and Gallegos, who stablished their starting point on more formal positions have now developed a rigorous teaching methodology and their work show an interesting spatial ability.

Ábalos and Herreros, with a clear tendency to support their work in wisely researched technology, show up their evocative connections to Herzog and De Meuron or the best Goldsmith from SOM.

Aparicio insists on the value of pure architecture that he rates great in strength and density , qualities that begin to rise up.

Sancho y Madridejos have wisely managed to stand up and resist with their highly coherent exercise of architecture together with their theoretical works about *Void* as a generating seed for architectural space. We will mention their latest works as embodied with light and incredibly well-tempered. Fortunately for the school of Madrid these are the youngest senior lecturers and are without exception, outstanding architects with reknown prestige based upon the coherence of their teaching criteria and professional performance as in their constant devotion to University.

Some of them already hold a Ph.D., like Gazapo, and others are about to read their dissertation: Matos, Martínez, Cánovas, Maruri, Amann, Tuñón, Mansilla (who read it in 1998) Sobejano, Nieto and Ruiz-Barbarín. This academic requirement is demanded from every Spanish University in order to be able to become a lecturer, but we rate it as a guaranty of their interest and critical awareness, vital for their teaching purposes.

In this same frame of mind, another whole group of teachers are ready to set up their theme of research that is later to develop in a dissertation: Soto, Colomé, De la Mata, García Gil, Gómez García, De Blas, Pardo, Soriano. Also Corrales, Herrera, Lapuerta, Moure, Santamaría, Mera, San Vicente, Maroto, Lleó, Revillo, Torrelo, Burgos, Vaquero, Feduchi, Cano Pintos, García Pedrosa, Pieltain. And the most recent ones Garrido, Torres, Ulargui, Pesquera y De Miguel.

## DRILLING INTO HISTORY

This last chapter of the story we are trying to write is a continuation part of that about the 28 architects and links to Carlos Flores' *Arquitectura Española Contemporánea* (Spanish Contemporary Architecture) a brilliant, extense and profound document about a certain recent period well revealed in the text; the period of the great masters.

Just as History behaviours, rather than in self-contained circles, these architectural proposals coil up in a continuous and not closed spiral where essential elements keep reappearing in many moments throughout this geometry.

Like any spiral, it has the property of drilling into History advancing, progressing and gaining positions like a drill into a soft material.

If back in the seventies those 28 architects already pointed out some outstanding qualities, I want now to emphasize the virtues of this new group which are even more precise:

They benefit from a solid ground of profoundly acquired knowledge; they believe in architecture as a purely creative art; they show coherence between their built work and their theoretical base; they are idealistic, boosting with ideas that can be built. They, above all, defend their freedom that develops from their creative exercise.

If this "outcast" artists, so cultivated, senseful, idealistic, free-thinking, are to be encouraged not to surrender in their aim, I will condense all the confidence contained in this text into a few simple words.

**Outcasts, Hang on !!**

Published in *Arquitectura*, 304. 1995